

# **ADVENT WORSHIP RESOURCES 2021**

## **North Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church**

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# Advent Week 1

## Advent 1: Call to Worship

(An Intro for the Advent Season)

Adapted by Rebecca Garrett Pace from "A Litany of Darkness and Light"  
*A Procession of Prayers: Meditations and Prayers from Around the World*  
John Carden, 1998

VOICE 1: Come, friends, for now is when Advent begins, this journey of joy in the darkness.

VOICE 2: We wait in the darkness, expectantly, longingly, anxiously, thoughtfully.  
The darkness is our friend.  
In the darkness of the womb, we have all been nurtured and protected.  
In the darkness of the womb, the Christ-child was made ready for the journey into light.

**ALL: You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.**

VOICE 1: It is only in the darkness that we can see the splendour of the universe - blankets of stars, the solitary glowings of distant planets.  
It was the darkness that allowed the Magi to find the star that guided them to where the Christ-child lay.

**ALL: You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.**

VOICE 2: In the darkness of the night, desert peoples find relief from the cruel relentless heat of the sun.  
In the blessed desert darkness, Mary and Joseph were able to flee with the infant Jesus to safety in Egypt.

**ALL: You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.**

VOICE 1: In the darkness of sleep, we are restored and renewed. In the darkness of sleep, dreams rise up. God spoke to Jacob and Joseph and Pilate's wife through dreams. God is speaking still.

**ALL: You are with us, O God, in darkness and in light.**

VOICE 2: And in that same darkness, we come face to face with what the last two years have been for us, personally and globally. We come face to face with our fatigue, our

grief, our limitations - we allow ourselves to wonder and worry whether the human race is going to make it at all.

**ALL: So we pray together - we know you are with us, O God, yet we still await your coming. In the darkness of your mysterious unknowing, we watch for a sign of God's Hope.**

## Advent 1: Wreath Lighting Liturgy - Hope

*[Optional: Sing stanza 1 of UMH #211 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel either before or immediately following this candle lighting liturgy]*

### **SCRIPTURE**

Hear these words from Jeremiah 33:14-16

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

### **REFLECTION**

We light this candle to symbolize the Hope of Advent. Hope seems to be missing in action lately, doesn't it? We read Jeremiah and we ask, "God, when will we truly experience the righteousness and safety you have promised?"

We light this candle and we're reminded that there have *always* been voices calling out for hope in the midst of injustice, prejudice, and despair - we've just sometimes chosen not to listen. Maybe this time, we'll be able to listen. Maybe this year, we can be part of God's Advent Hope.

We light this candle not to drown out the darkness, but to illuminate what we have to learn from it. O come, O come, Emmanuel!

*[LIGHT CANDLE BEFORE CONTINUING TO PRAYER]*

### **PRAYER**

Let us pray.

**ALL: Hope-giving God, help us believe that you will truly restore our hope and fulfill your promises of justice and righteousness. Help us to live as people of hope in this sometimes hopeless world. Amen.**

## Advent 1: Readings

Jeremiah 33:14-16

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness."

Psalms 25:1-10

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame;  
do not let my enemies exult over me.

Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;  
let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.

Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation;  
for you I wait all day long.

Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love,  
for they have been from of old.

Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;  
according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O LORD!

Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.

All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,  
for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you? Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you face to face and restore whatever is lacking in your faith. Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus direct our way to you. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we abound in love for you. And may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Luke 21:25-36

"There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

"Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

## Advent 1: Benediction

As you go forth from this place, may you be inspired both by God's mysterious darkness and by God's marvelous light. May you be called beyond your comfort zone to share God's Advent Hope with those to whom hope is a stranger. May you be Christ to a world in desperate need of Christ. Amen.

## **Advent Week 2**

### **Advent 2: Call to Worship**

VOICE 1: Come, siblings and strangers, friends and foes, seekers and skeptics, for all are welcome into God's peace-giving presence.

**ALL: Today we join the Magi in our search for the Advent God!**

VOICE 2: Come, whether you feel well or ill, whether you feel burdened or carefree, for all are welcome into God's peace-bringing presence.

**ALL: Today we join Mary and Elizabeth in our search for the Advent God!**

VOICE 1: Come, come learn and grow, come make mistakes and make amends, come rejoice and weep, for we are all welcome into God's peace-giving presence.

**ALL: Today we join Joseph, the shepherds, and the angels in our search for the Advent God!**

VOICE 2: Come, for today we journey a little farther into the joy and the darkness of Advent, toward the Christ-child.

**ALL: May we find and share God's hope, peace, joy, and love in the mysterious darkness of this Advent season.**

### **Advent 2: Wreath Lighting Liturgy - Peace**

*[Optional: Sing stanza 2 of UMH #211 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel either before or immediately following this candle lighting liturgy]*

#### **SCRIPTURE**

Hear these words from Luke 1:68-79

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that

he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

## **REFLECTION**

We light this candle to symbolize the Peace of Advent. But what does peace really feel like today? Is it an end to the pandemic? A healing of wounds and worries? A return to "normal," if that's even possible? Where is God asking us to be peace-makers?

We light this candle not to drown out the darkness, but to illuminate what we have to learn from it. O come, O come, Emmanuel!

*[LIGHT CANDLE BEFORE CONTINUING TO PRAYER]*

## **PRAYER**

Let us pray.

**ALL: Peace-bringing God, forgive us when we have hurt and destroyed instead of seeking peace. We ask that you bring peace into our thoughts, into our words, and into our hearts and actions. Help us to pursue Advent Peace each and every day. Amen.**

## Advent 2: Readings

Baruch 5:1-9

Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction, O Jerusalem, and put on forever the beauty of the glory from God. Put on the robe of the righteousness that comes from God; put on your head the diadem of the glory of the Everlasting; for God will show your splendor everywhere under heaven. For God will give you evermore the name, "Righteous Peace, Godly Glory." Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height; look toward the east, and see your children gathered from west and east at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing that God has remembered them. For they went out from you on foot, led away by their enemies; but God will bring them back to you, carried in glory, as on a royal throne. For God has ordered that every high mountain and the everlasting hills be made low and the valleys filled up, to make level ground, so that Israel may walk safely

in the glory of God. The woods and every fragrant tree have shaded Israel at God's command. For God will lead Israel with joy, in the light of his glory, with the mercy and righteousness that come from him.

Malachi 3:1-4

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight--indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

Luke 1:68-79

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us. Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins. By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Philippians 1:3-11

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.



Luke 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

## Advent 2: Benediction

As you go forth from this place, may you be inspired both by God's mysterious darkness and by God's marvelous light. May you be called beyond your comfort zone to share God's Advent Peace with those to whom peace is a stranger. May you be Christ to a world in desperate need of Christ. Amen.

## **Advent Week 3**

### **Advent 3: Call to Worship**

VOICE 1: Come, siblings and strangers, friends and foes, seekers and skeptics, for we are all welcome into God's joy-filled presence.

**ALL: Today we join the Magi in our search for the Advent God!**

VOICE 2: Come, whether you feel well or ill, whether you feel burdened or carefree, for we are all welcome into God's joy-filled presence.

**ALL: Today we join Mary and Elizabeth in our search for the Advent God!**

VOICE 1: Come, come learn and grow, come make mistakes and make amends, come rejoice and weep, for we are all welcome into God's joy-filled presence.

**ALL: Today we join Joseph, the shepherds, and the angels in our search for the Advent God!**

VOICE 2: Come, for today we journey a little farther into the joy and the darkness of Advent, toward the Christ-child.

**ALL: May we find and share God's hope, peace, joy, and love in the expectant darkness of this Advent season.**

### **Advent 3: Wreath Lighting Liturgy - Joy**

*[Optional: Sing stanza 3 of UMH #211 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel either before or immediately following this candle lighting liturgy]*

#### **SCRIPTURE**

Hear these words from Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

## REFLECTION

We light this candle to symbolize Joy. Joy is something that's bigger than *feelings* of happiness, and deeper than *emotions* of contentment. Joy is a state of being that can illuminate our lives, and that calls us to open wide our hearts to all of God's children.

We light this candle not to drown out the darkness, but to illuminate what we have to learn from it. O come, O come, Emmanuel!

*[LIGHT CANDLE BEFORE CONTINUING TO PRAYER]*

## PRAYER

Let us pray.

**ALL: Joyful God, we give you thanks for the ways you renew us with joy, and for the joy we can bring to each other. We ask that in this Advent time of preparation, we may glimpse your gladness, and hear your voice singing over us. Amen.**

## Advent 3: Readings

Zephaniah 3:14-20

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more. On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak. The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory; he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing as on a day of festival. I will remove disaster from you, so that you will not bear reproach for it. I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you home, at the time when I gather you; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the LORD.

Isaiah 12:2-6

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid,  
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation.  
With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.  
And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name;  
make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted.  
Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;

let this be known in all the earth.  
Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,  
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Luke 3:7-18

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." And the crowds asked him, "What then should we do?" In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages." As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.

### Advent 3: Benediction

As you go forth from this place, may you be inspired both by God's mysterious darkness and by God's marvelous light. May you be called beyond your comfort zone to share God's Advent Joy with those to whom joy is a stranger. May you be Christ to a world in desperate need of Christ. Amen.

# Advent Week 4

## Advent 4: Call to Worship

VOICE 1: Come, siblings and strangers, friends and foes, seekers and skeptics, for we are all welcome into God's loving presence.

**ALL: Today we join the Magi in our search for the Advent God!**

VOICE 2: Come, whether you feel well or ill, whether you feel burdened or carefree, for we are all welcome into God's loving presence.

**ALL: Today we join Mary and Elizabeth in our search for the Advent God!**

VOICE 1: Come, come learn and grow, come make mistakes and make amends, come rejoice and weep, for we are all welcome into God's loving presence.

**ALL: Today we join Joseph, the shepherds, and the angels in our search for the Advent God!**

VOICE 2: Come, for today we journey a little farther into the joy and the darkness of Advent, toward the Christ-child.

**ALL: May we find and share God's hope, peace, joy, and love in the healing darkness of this Advent season.**

## Advent 4: Wreath Lighting Liturgy - Love

*[Optional: Sing stanza 4 of UMH #211 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel either before or immediately following this candle lighting liturgy]*

### **SCRIPTURE**

Hear these words from **Luke 1:46b-55\*\* (see note below)**

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.  
His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.  
He has shown strength with his arm;

He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.  
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;  
He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.  
He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,  
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

## **REFLECTION**

We light this candle to symbolize Love. We love because God first loved us. We love because one of the names God claims is Love itself. We love because the whole of creation is echoing God's love over and over. May the God of Love come among us once more this season.

We light this candle not to drown out the darkness, but to illuminate what we have to learn from it. O come, O come, Emmanuel!

*[LIGHT CANDLE BEFORE CONTINUING TO PRAYER]*

## **PRAYER**

Let us pray.

**ALL: Loving God, what an incredible thing it is that you love every single part of your creation, including each of us. Help us to mirror your love toward everyone that we meet. In your name, the name of Love, we pray. Amen!**

**\*\* If the Lukan text is the preaching text of the day, use an alternate lectionary text here, such as Micah 5:2-5a**

## Advent 4: Readings

Micah 5:2-5a

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

Luke 1:46b-55

"My soul magnifies the Lord,

and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.  
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.  
His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.  
He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.  
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;  
he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.  
He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,  
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Psalm 80:1-7

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,  
you who lead Joseph like a flock!  
You who are enthroned upon the cherubim,  
shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.  
Stir up your might, and come to save us!  
Restore us, O God;  
let your face shine, that we may be saved.  
O LORD God of hosts,  
how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?  
You have fed them with the bread of tears,  
and given them tears to drink in full measure.  
You make us the scorn of our neighbors;  
our enemies laugh among themselves.  
Restore us, O God of hosts;  
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Hebrews 10:5-10

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do your will, O God' (in the scroll of the book it is written of me)." When he said above, "You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then he added, "See, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Luke 1:39-45, (46-55)

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

And Mary said,

"My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.  
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.  
His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.  
He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.  
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;  
he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.  
He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,  
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

## Advent 4: Benediction

As you go forth from this place, may you be inspired both by God's mysterious darkness and by God's marvelous light. May you be called beyond your comfort zone to share God's Advent Love with those to whom love is a stranger. May you be Christ to a world in desperate need of Christ. Amen.



# Christmas Eve

## Christmas Eve: Christ Candle Lighting Liturgy

*[Optional: Sing stanza 3 of #224 Good Christian Friends, Rejoice either before or immediately following this candle lighting liturgy]*

### **SCRIPTURE**

Hear these words from Luke 2:10-12

And the angel said to the shepherds,

“Do not be afraid! For see —

I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people!

To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior,

who is the Messiah, the Lord!

### **REFLECTION**

We light the Christ Candle to symbolize the birth of Jesus - at last! After weeks of waiting! This candle represents not the completion of our Advent journey, but the continuation of it, as we continue to spread God’s hope, peace, joy, and love to every single person we meet.

We light this candle not to drown out the darkness, but to illuminate what we have to learn from it.

*[LIGHT CANDLE BEFORE CONTINUING TO PRAYER]*

### **PRAYER**

Let us pray

**ALL: Loving God, we thank you for your Son Jesus, who shows up once again to be with us here and now! Help us share this incredible story with everyone we meet, not just today, but every single day. Amen!**

## Christmas Eve: Benediction

As you go forth from this place, may you live as ones who have witnessed the incredible birth of God-become-human. May you be called beyond your comfort zone to share this Christmas Story not just in what you say, but also in how you live. May you be Christ to a world in desperate need of Christ. Amen! Merry Christmas!

# First Sunday After Christmas

## Christmas 2: Call to Worship

LEADER: This is the day that God has made!

**ALL: Let us all rejoice and be glad!**

LEADER: Today, may we pause a moment and just rejoice because of God's amazing love in human form, the infant Jesus!

**ALL: May we spread the Good News of Jesus' birth!**

LEADER: Today, may we say a prayer of thanks for all those who labor and birth new life into this old world - teachers and therapists, mothers and doulas, nurses and doctors and visionaries - and all who dream new dreams and encourage new life.

**ALL: May we be bringers of new life to this old world!**

LEADER: Today, may we say a prayer of love and comfort for those for whom Christmas is a difficult time, for whom the New Year brings no real hope - those who have lost loved ones, who are ill, and who are grieving.

**ALL: May we be bringers of quiet comfort in this holiday season.**

LEADER: Today, may we not be too eager to jump into the next phase of life, into the post-Christmas rush, back to the grind, boxing up the Christmas story til next year.

**ALL: May we treat every single day like Christmas Day!**

LEADER: This is the day that God has made!

**ALL: Let us all rejoice and be glad! Merry Christmas!**

## Christmas 2: Readings

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26

Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy wearing a linen ephod. His mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year, when she went up with

her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "May the LORD repay you with children by this woman for the gift that she made to the LORD"; and then they would return to their home. Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and with the people.

#### Psalm 148

Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights!

Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host!

Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!

Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!

Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created.

He established them forever and ever;

he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.

Praise the LORD from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,

fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!

Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!

Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!

Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!

Young men and women alike, old and young together!

Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted;

his glory is above earth and heaven. He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for

all his faithful, for the people of Israel who are close to him. Praise the LORD!

#### Colossians 3:12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

#### Luke 2:41-52

Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When

they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

## Christmas 2: Benediction

As you go forth from this place, may you be inspired to share the Christmas Story with everyone you meet, not just in what you say, but also in how you live. May you be Christ to a world in desperate need of Christ. Amen!